



Photo taken on May 20, 2012, from the Route 156 highway bridge. The 1907 span is 45' long and the new span is 138' long.

Progress Report: East Lyme's Overlook Park

by R.S. De Santo, East Lyme Public Trust Foundation, Inc.

Were it not for the replacement of the Niantic River railroad bridge by Amtrak, the adjacent public Overlook Park would not be so improved as it will be by May, 2013, including the addition of a 230 foot long stone groin that will grow the park by adding 8 new acres to its beach. In that spirit, this is a tribute to the history of the bridge as a benefactor to Overlook Park.

The earliest record of a crossing at the mouth of the Niantic River dates from 1660, when John Winthrop of New London was authorized to operate a ferry across the river. The first roadway bridge to span at, or near, this site was a toll bridge built by the Niantic Bridge Company in 1796. Almost a century later, the first railway bridge was constructed when the Shore Line Railway was built between New Haven and New London in 1852. In 1891, shortly after consolidation of this rail line into the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad system, the Niantic railway bridge was replaced with a swing bridge. The present rolling-lift bridge depicted here, was built in 1907, when the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad was making substantial improvements throughout the system, in order to permit the use of heavier and faster trains.

Bridge replacement today will cost Amtrak a total of \$155 million (±1.5 million). Within that total budget, replacement of the Niantic

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